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Governor Chafee, Broadband RI Announce Winner of Design Challenge to “Connect the Disconnected”

Broadband RI, Brown University and RISD team up to identify innovative ideas to improve access to online information as part of 2012 A Better World by Design Challenge

October 1, 2012 (Providence, RI)— Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation’s (RIEDC’s) Broadband Rhode Island (BBRI) initiative and the internationally acclaimed conference A Better World by Design have announced that a design team with the organization A Human Right has been selected in The Better World Challenge identifying creative solutions to closing the digital divide.

A diverse group of judges selected the presentation by A Human Right founder and CEO Kosta Grammatis and his team from among 14 submissions from innovators throughout the world. This year’s A Better World by Design Challenge, “Connect the Disconnected,” asked for thoughtful plans to improve online information access for those who encounter educational, economic or geographical barriers.

“The Better World by Design Challenge demonstrates that government, in collaboration with our outstanding colleges and universities can play a positive, proactive role in helping to close the digital divide,” said Governor Chafee. “The winning submission from A Human Right holds great potential for connecting the disconnected.”

Grammatis, who has researched at the MIT Media Lab and has worked on projects ranging from bionic eyes to spacecraft, and his team outlined a two-stage process that first would leverage unused bandwidth to expand Internet access and then would offer U.S. cellular customers an incentive to buy data capacity that would trigger donations internationally to a “Bandwidth Bank.”

The winning submission was named on the final day of the Sept. 28-30 A Better World by Design conference, an annual event in Providence that calls upon the expertise of innovators from numerous disciplines to deepen the understanding of how design, technology and enterprise can enhance communities. Leaders from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and Brown University’s chapter of Engineers Without Borders launched A Better World by Design in 2008.

“A Human Right’s solution to closing the digital divide demonstrates clear innovation and a commitment to achieving widespread gains for individuals most in need,” said Stuart Freiman, Broadband Program Director, RIEDC. “In our post-conference activity, we will convene a group of stakeholders along with the winner to translate these creative ideas into an implementation plan for our target populations here in Rhode Island.”

Freiman served on the panel of judges for this year’s challenge, a broad-based group that also included Jessica David, vice president of strategy, planning and special projects at the Rhode Island Foundation; Renée Hobbs, professor and founding director of the Media Education Lab at the University of Rhode Island’s (URI’s) Harrington School of Communication and Media, Laura Marlane, executive director of the Providence Community Library; and Dwight McMillan, principal of Basics Group.

Submissions in The Better World Challenge were judged on whether they had clear, measurable impacts; if the design team showed capacity to realize its goals; their overall feasibility and sustainability; and their level of innovation.

The public is encouraged to visit the A Better World by Design website at <http://www.abetterworldbydesign.com/challenge/> to find out more about the 2012 Challenge.

About Broadband Rhode Island

Broadband Rhode Island, an initiative of Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC), is funded through December 2014 by the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBBD) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The initiative focuses on broadband mapping and broadband planning in the State of Rhode Island. Programs will address public awareness and education about broadband and study and develop plans to increase adoption rate and broadband usage across all aspects of our lives including in our homes, schools, businesses, libraries, healthcare facilities, public safety and government. To learn more about Broadband Rhode Island please visit: <http://broadband.ri.gov>

About A Better World by Design

A Better World by Design is a three-day internationally acclaimed conference held annually at Brown & RISD campuses in Providence, RI that connects thousands of students, professionals, and individuals from a variety of disciplines in order to build a global community of socially conscious and passionate innovators. Our group of students has built a worldwide network of social innovators because we believe in thinking globally and acting locally. As we build our global presence, we continue to strengthen our relationships to create impact in our immediate communities. By collaborating with thought-leading students, academics, and professionals, Better World by Design continues to foster mutually enriching exchange and be a strong presence in the fields of sustainable and socially-conscious design. To learn more about A Better World by Design please visit: <http://www.abetterworldbydesign.com>.